AN (2)

EXHORTATION

To All

Dissenters

TO

Return into the

Church of *ENGLAND.*

By Richard Stafford

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TO THE READER.

A *General Indifferency*, Lukewarmneſs (*ſee* Rev. 3. 16.) *and Unconcernedneſs in matters of Religion, hath ſpread throughout all the Churches, Sects and Parties among us. Which now of late hath been more obſerved, ſince they have had free Liberty of Worſhip, according to their ſeveral Opinions or Perſwaſions, without any manner of Perſecution or Proſecution againſt them. So that at this Day Diſcourſes of this Nature (as the enſuing Treatiſe is) will be more apt to be deſpiſed and leſs minded. And conſequently be unacceptable unto the Multitude of Profeſſors and outward Worſhippers. Moreover there hath been* Line upon

Line, Precept upon Precept, *very many Books and Sermons to the same purpose already; all which hitherto have been ineffectual and insufficient to bring all those who call themselves Christians unto Unity, and to hold that Foundation firm of* Worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth. *Howbeit all that have been, the present Tract, or what Books shall hereafter be written on this Subject, are not Unseasonable, because at this Moment People have a God to Serve, and Souls to to Save (in order to which they must find acceptance from him in their way of Worship) as much now as ever in former Days, or in past Generations.*

The Compiler of these following lines is not altogether such an Ignorant Zealot for the Church of England *way of Worship; But if He knows, or is convinced of any way more true and Right than that is, He is ready to forsake that and cleave unto the other. But what is here alledged from out of the* Scripture of Truth, *should in like manner Influence and Perswade them also who have*

Separated

Separated *from us, to return back again to that Communion, which from hence ſeems to be both True and Right. If there is indeed any thing therein, which is not according to the* Pattern ſhewed to us in God's written Word, *that ought to be laid aſide; and if any thing therein ſhall be found* wanting, *when it is weighed by the Balance of that ſame Word, that alſo ought to be had and ſupplied. It is not here ſo much deſigned to ſet up, or advance any National Communion whatever, that all others ſhould either come over unto it, with an implicit Faith, or be compelled to blindly conform unto it, whether it be Right or Wrong,* God forbid. *But rather that we all ſhould come to the* Unity of the Faith, *and to the Truth of Worſhip.*

As to all the ſeveral Sorts and Perſwaſions amongſt the Proteſtant Reformed Religion, it may be perceived that there are ſome good Things among them, which if they did all meet and concenter in One, they would make an excellent and compleat

Chriſtian. So on the other hand, There is in each of them ſomewhat (which if I will not call Erroneous) yet it may be properly called peculiar and diſtinct to ſuch a Sect or Party. Whereby is ſhewn forth as if they had a mind to keep up ſtill the Partition Wall. *Whereas*, after my Judgment, (*for ſo from* 1 Cor. 7. 40. *we are allowed to ſpeak ſometimes, when we do not deliver Things by way of Doctrine and Commandment*) *they would come nearer to the Mind of Chriſt, if, as he did break down the Partition Wall between* Jew *and* Gentile, *ſo they would ſtudy and ſeek out, That all who* Name the Name of Chriſt, might be like-minded one towards another, according to Chriſt Jeſus, that they may with one Mind, and one Mouth, glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, Rom. 15. 5, 6. *And that it might be ſo again, That all who believed were together*, Acts 2. 44. *And they might meet in the ſame Place, and agree to the ſame Manner (according to the pattern*

pattern ſhewed to them in the Scriptures, to Worſhip and Serve the Lord. That all the Children of God who are ſcattered abroad *in the ſeveral Profeſſions and Congregations (for the Univerſally Good and Upright in every one of them are God's Children, and ſuch only will be ſaved) might be* gathered together in one. *For ſo we read expreſly in* John 11. 50, 51. *that this was the end of Chriſt's Death. Who, (though he is now aſcended up into Heaven, and ſits on the Right Hand of God, yet he ſees and knows the things that are done on the Earth all this mean while. And I do believe that he would be well-pleaſed and* ſatisfied *if he did* ſee the Travel of his Soul *in this Thing, that it might be ſo accompliſhed, for which he* poured out his Soul unto Death. *But as long as Sin, Tranſgreſſion, Ignorance, and* corrupt Intereſt *(which laſt is the chief hindrance) are in the Minds of many; This is rather to be Hoped and Prayed for, and to be endeavoured after, than as yet is to be expected.*

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To the Reader.

The Apostle Paul *did charge the Men of* Athens *with* too much Superstition, *an* Altar to the Unknown God, *and with* Ignorant Worship; *so it would be good Counsel to all the Churches, and to the People of the several Religious Assemblies among us, to look well to it, and take heed, that there be not the least degree, nor yet tincture of* Superstition *among them; that there be nothing directed and terminated to the Unknown God, who is Invisible, and therefore Himself had need to* teach us to Order our Way to him, because of Darkness, *as the Expression is in the Book of* Job. *Nor yet any thing of Ignorant Worship. I mean, nothing of which a Rational and Intelligible Account cannot be given, which doth not come under a* Reasonable Service, *Rom.* 12. 1. *Or what is not a* being ready to give a Reason of the Hope that is in ye; *so all Christians should be ready to give a Reason of the Worship that is used among them. And such a Reason also that is to be understood, not only by those of the same*

same Communion, but such as may be understood even by Unbelievers and Unlearned, 1 Cor. 14. 23, 24, 25. *and yet much more by others of a different Perswasion, and manner of Worship, holding the Foundation sure. Certain it is, That* all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God. *There is an* iniquity of our Holy Things: *And we read in* Jer. 51. 11. *of the* Vengeance of the Temple. *By which the Holy Ghost doth signifie, amongst other things, That God will punish that Sin and Errour, which hath been intermixed in his Worship. So the People of the several Opinions and Perswasions in the different Congregations and Places, have all along, and do at this day come short of the Truth and Spiritualty, the Holiness and Excellency of that high Profession and Worship of God, as they may read of in his Word, both in the Old Testament, and yet more especially in the Gospel. For whosoever hath a through understanding of, and insight into the Scriptures of Truth, he may conceive of,*

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and apprehend a more Sublime, Divine and Spiritual manner of the Worſhip and Service of God, than he can ſee any where uſed on this Earth. This will yet be more clearly ſeen and underſtood at the Judgment of the Great Day.

AN

Exhortation

TO

All Dissenters,

(However they are distinguish-ed or named) to Return into the Communion of the *Church of* England.

THere are abundance (would God they were more) of the meaner sort of People, who ead a Religious and Godly Life; who o not forget God their Saviour, as hey commonly do who are Rich, and ave all manner of Plenty. For the

Holy Ghoſt doth foreſee what Men are prone and liable unto, when he doth ſo particularly caution them beforehand concerning this, *Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping his Commandments, and his Judgments, and his Statutes, which I command thee this day; leſt when thou haſt eaten, and art full, and haſt built goodly Houſes, and dwelt therein; and when thy Herds, and thy Flocks multiply; and thy Silver, and thy Gold is multiplied, then thine Heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, Deut.* 8. 11, 12, 13, 14. Yet ſo it commonly happens at this day, that the *Rich of the People* (who have the moſt reaſon to Honour, Serve and Obey God, becauſe of his Goodneſs unto them) do contrary-wiſe moſt of all forget or deſpiſe him; and their Heart is *lifted up*, that they are aſhamed, and they refuſe to come over unto the plainneſs and ſimplicity of Goſpel-Worſhip, or to keep Company with his Saints and People, if they be

be Poor and Low in outward Estate. But more especially amongst this latter sort are found those *Peculiar People, Redeemed from all Iniquity, and Zealous of Good Works.* Whom though Penury will not suffer to abound, and make so much outward shew therein, as those who do some little good out of their great abundance; yet these do *cast their Mite into the Treasury*, and give their Farthing unto a Poor Creature (for such usually have the most Compassion who are also Partakers, and sensible of the like Adversity themselves) and this is in like manner, yea more acceptable with God than they are, who *give out of their Abundance*, Mat. 12. 41, 42, 43. *for if there be first a willing Mind, it is accepted according to that a Man hath, and not according to that a Man hath not*, 2 *Cor.* 8. 12. And seeing that these would do more good if they had wherewithal, it is almost the same; their Will is accepted for the Deed. He that hath least of this World's

Goods, may as well lead a Christian Life as they which have most. And in truth it commonly happens, that those which have little share in worldly Blessings, do mightily abound in Spiritual. Who have just sufficient for Life and Godliness, yet their Faith and Good Conversation deserve to be spoken of throughout the World. Those whom the Proud Men call the Ordinary Sort of People, will make up far the greater number in Heaven. We see more of them, allowing for their Multitude, that Practise Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, than is to be found amongst People of Higher Rank: For almost one half of the common People seem to be Zealous for, and well-affected towards Religion in the general, and also they are found diligent and constant in the Exercise of Godliness. I wish the like could be said of Great Men, who are otherwise called Gentlemen. *But these have altogether broke the Yoke, and burst the Bonds*, Jer. 5. 5. Nevertheless the Prophet

Prophet ſaith of the others alſo, *Surely theſe are Poor; they are Fooliſh, for they know not the Way of the Lord, nor the Judgment of their God*, Verſe 4. Many of them have a good meaning, but they ignorantly Worſhip they know not what, they know not how. They underſtand not the Duties of Religion ſo well as they ſhould; but they follow their own Imaginations and Opinions. And Satan, *who deceiveth the whole World*, Rev. 12. 9. hath taken advantage thereof, and hath filled them full of Errors and Deceits.

Suffer I beſeech ye Brethren, the *Word of Exhortation* and Inſtruction here in a few words, as to the firſt of them; for I intend no harm, but good unto your Souls; and my Heart's deſire is, that ye may be in the Right Way unto Heaven.

It is much Pity to conſider, That they who are affected with a real and lively ſenſe of Religion, who verily *believe that God is, and that He is a*

Rewarder of them who diligently seek him, who have a good Heart, and a good Mind, ſhould be toſſed to and fro with every wind of Doctrine, and not be fixed and ſtabliſhed in the Truth. The greater part of good and well-meaning People are crumbled into Sects and Parties. One is for this, another for that; whilſt the Pure, Primitive Chriſtianity, and that Way of Worſhip which was uſed in the Days of the Apoſtles, and Firſt Chriſtians, is now in a manner loſt from among us, as it is rejected and refuſed by the Multitude. If any knew what was Right, certainly they did who ſaw our Saviour in the Fleſh, and were with him after his Paſſion, *Amongſt whom He was Forty Days, ſpeaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.* So that it muſt be ſuppoſed, they were by him truly and perfectly inſtructed therein. If ever God had a true Church in the World, (as he hath always) moſt certainly he had at that time. *As* Moſes *was*

admoniſhed

admoniſhed of God when He was about to make the Tabernacle, for ſee (ſaith He) *that thou make all Things according to the Pattern ſhewed thee in the Mount*, Heb. 8. 5. So He likewiſe who was greater than *Moſes* hath obtained *a more excellent Miniſtry*, and hath ſhewed a Way in the Goſpel, that we may Pray unto, and Praiſe Almighty God. The Apoſtles, and firſt Chriſtians did *Baptize*, and obſerve the Feaſt of the Lord's Supper, and Preach the Goſpel. Some do affirm that the *Jews* had a ſet and conſtant Liturgy, in which were many *Pſalms* of *David*, which made up a great part of their Worſhip. The Scriptures of Truth do mention their Reading the Law and the Prophets. Moſes *in old Time hath in every City them that Preach him, being Read in the Synagogue every Sabbath* Day, Acts 15. 21. which is anſwerable unto that Reading of Chapters, and Preaching of Sermons in every Pariſh of this Nation, in Places ſet apart and appointed

for it. Our Saviour Jesus Christ, when He dwelt upon the Earth, did frequent those Synagogues, though the *Jewish* Church was defaced with many Corruptions. *And He came to* Nazareth, *where He had been brought up, and as his Custom was* (observe that) *He went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath Day, and stood up for to Read,* Luke 4. 16. Now in the Synagogue there was such a manner of Worship, so that Himself did comply therewith; Although it be no where said in the Old Testament, That they should Worship God exactly in that Order, and after that Manner. Indeed in the Books of *Leviticus* and *Numbers* there are many particular directions given from God concerning the Place and Utensils of Worship, the *Tabernacle*, and *Ark of the Testament*. But there is not much said of what Particular Words should be used, saving a Form of Blessing, wherewith the *Levites* were commanded to Bless

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the People, as we read in the Book of *Numbers*.

What was lawful to the *Jews* is to us *Gentiles* alſo. *For mine Houſe ſhall be called an Houſe of Prayer for all Nations*, Iſa. 56. 7. which extends even to the Goſpel-Times, as may be underſtood from *Mat.* 21. 13. *Mark* 11. 17. ſo that it muſt extend to the *Gentiles* alſo. The High-Prieſt of our Profeſſion, even Chriſt Jeſus, hath commanded us, *when we Pray, to ſay, Our Father which art in Heaven*, Luke 11. 2. But beſides this ſhort Form, He hath not preſcribed any other ſet Form of Words, or how long we muſt Pray; that being ſuppoſed to be left to the Elders and Teachers of the Church, who had received the Gifts of the Spirit. Accordingly I have Read, that mention is made in Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, That *James*, and ſome other Apoſtles, compoſed Forms of Prayer to be uſed in the Aſſemblies of thoſe whom they had Converted to the Faith; and after the ſame Example

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the Common Prayer of the *Church of England* is taken, (not so much out of the Mass Book, as hath been often objected) but out of those Antient Forms. It is Praying unto God in his own Words; for it is almost wholly made up of Scripture-Phrase and Expressions: So that no Wise and Good Man can be justly offended thereat. And then there is Reading of the Scriptures, Singing of Psalms, Preaching the Word; which are all Gospel Duties.

As for those few and significant Ceremonies retained therein, some of them were used in the first times of Christianity; before ever the Corruption of the *Roman* Church crept in, and they seem to be Warranted by that general Rule and Command of the Apostle, *Let all things be done decently and in order*, 1 Cor. 14. 40. By this the Elders of the Church seem to be Authorized and Impowered to prescribe some particular things Relating to this same decency and order. The same

Apostle

Apoſtle *Paul* Intimates, *How he had ordained ſome things to be kept in all the Churches:* And as to the other things he ſaith, *I will ſet them in order when I come.* So that it may be reaſoned and conceived, that if it be not lawful to impoſe theſe Ceremonies, the Sin lies at their Door who impoſed them. And it ſhall be no more laid to the Charge of the Poor People, then it was blamed in the ordinary and common Jews, becauſe the Scribes and Phariſees had *taught for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.* Yet we do not Read that ever the People were blamed for it; for Poor Souls! What had they done? How could they help the Errors of their Teachers? But on the other hand, if they who are ordained by God, to be overſeers of his Church, do only that which is lawful and Right, and what they are allowed from that his word, 1 *Cor.* 14. 40. Then how can the People be excuſed from Tranſgreſſion who do not comply therewith? Eſpecially when they are fur-

ther commanded, *Submit your ſelves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's ſake. As free, and not uſing your Liberty for a Cloak of Maliciouſneſs, but as the Servants of God*, 1 Pet. 2. 13, 16. The Author to the *Hebrews* hath fully and clearly explained this matter, ſaying, *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and ſubmit your ſelves; for they watch for your Souls, as they that muſt give account*, Heb. 13. 17. They muſt both give account for their Doctrine, whereby they are here ſaid to watch for our Souls, and alſo for their Orders and Impoſitions, wherein conſiſteth that *Rule* which here they are ſuppoſed to have over the People. If themſelves are Diſobedient to the Word in their own Life and Converſation, yet by the Command of Chriſt we are ſtill to hearken unto, and to do according to their Doctrine, *The Scribes and Phariſees ſit in* Moſes *ſeat. All therefore whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do; but do not after their Works, for they ſay and do not,*

ot, Mat. 23. 2. In like manner the Miniſters and Preachers may be ſuppoſed to derive down their Ordination from Chriſt and his Apoſtles, having it ſucceſſively from the Elders of the Church, and from the *Presbytery* (which ſignifies Prieſthood) unto whom the Power of laying on of Hands was given: So that they are outwardly ſent to Preach the Goſpel, which they do, though ſome live not accordingly, yet ſtill by the aforemencioned Command of Chriſt we are to hear them. If any ſhould Preach their own Imaginations, or the private Opinion of others; for which they have no ground from the Word of God, yet that is left as a ſtanding Rule to try the Doctrines whether they are of Men or no. Like as *Virgil* could pick Gold out of *Ennius* his Dunghil, ſo out of their Sermons ſome good thing may be gathered by a gracious ſoul; and godly Diſcretion will ſeparate the precious from the vile. So that which ſeems to be the greateſt

Plea

Plea for it, yet is no just cause for separation, I mean the Sin, Ignorance or Pride of some of the Clergy.

For this last thing of Pride and *seeking their own Glory* (which is opposite unto *seeking his Glory that sent him*, and is a sign and suspicion of a false Teacher, *John* 7. 18.) makes them *speak of themselves*. So that they, which are otherwise Learned enough, to shew their Parts and Scholarship, will in their Preaching insist upon abstruse Points of Divinity, and things hard to be understood, and useless Notions; such are ashamed of the plain Scripture way of Preaching, accounting that too mean for them, and it is *foolishness*, 1 Cor. 1. 22. in their sight. And therefore they leave the Things contained therein, and they run out to *Seneca*, *Epictetus*, *Cicero*, and the Wise Heathens; or to some quaint Notions of the Schoolmen, or their own, or other Mens fangled Opinions, of which no clear footsteps are to be seen in the Scripture, the

Pillar

Pillar and Ground of Truth. Let none misunderstand me, for I do not altogether speak against that kind of Learning; seeing that the Spirit of God doth Record, *Moses was learned in all the Wisdom of the Egyptians*, Acts 7. 22. And as God's own People did borrow Ear-rings from them, so likewise may the Ministers of the Gospel (they having the Apostle *Paul* for an Example herein, *Acts* 17. 28. *Titus* 1. 12.) make use of the Sayings of the Antient Heathens, (who spake according to the Wisdom which God had given them as his Creatures) many of them being full of Lustre, and goodly Perswasives to Sobriety and Righteousness of Life. But I can in no wise approve of a Sermon made up wholly of this sort of Trash; and when it is not made subservient unto, but altogether thrusts out Holy Scripture.

The Corruption of the Ministers is no sufficient Reason to neglect the Assembling of our selves together in the

the Appointed Way of the Nation. Neither is the Sin and Wickedneſs of the People that come in among us. This is a very great Stumbling-block which lyes at the Door of the Sanctuary, and hinders abundance of well-meaning People from entring therein. The Drunkards, Swearers, Whoremongers (ſay they) go to Church; and we cannot join in Prayers with them. *For what Fellowſhip hath Righteouſneſs with Unrighteouſneſs? And what Communion hath Light with Darkneſs? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord.* And indeed it muſt be acknowledged that the beſt things are moſt liable to be corrupted, and there are the greateſt deviations and failings from the beſt Churches; for the Church to be without ſpot or wrinkle is the alone peculiar Privilege of Her, when ſhe ſhall be Triumphant in Heaven, and not Militant on Earth. There being a *ſpot of God's Children* which is *not corrupting themſelves*; Deut. 32. 5.

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The *Church of Corinth* erred as concerning the Resurrection, which is a Fundamental Article of Faith, and yet continued a Church. But however Pure, True and Right the Discipline or Liturgy of the *Church* is in it self, yet some of her pretended Members will be depraved and crooked. It hath been commonly said, and slanderously reported by those who dissent from it, *As if the Church of* England *was a formal, superficial and outside kind of Religion: But such do not truly and throughly consider, That this is more the fault of the Worshippers than of the Constitution it self.* Those which are wicked, and consequently have no regard for God and Religion, will be sure to profess that outwardly which is most in fashion, and therefore in most Countreys of the World, they which are most ungodly and profane, will yet reckon themselves of the National Church. Hence, they *who separate themselves* accuse us of having the worse Proselytes, and they esteem of

our Faith by their Manners. But i
the Lives of its Professors were a goo
Rule to judge by of any Religion
then some called *Protestants* would b
the worst of Christians, and some cal
led Christians would be the worst o
Men in the World: For the Enemy
of Mankind hath in all Ages shewe
forth most Wrath and Spight against
the purest Churches (this being mos
advantagious to his pestilent design o
destroying Souls) and hence hath a
rose that common Calumny, (which
being invented by the Father of Lies
hath spread it self abroad in order t
break the Peace and Unity, and t
bring a Scandal on the Church.)
That none can be of an Holy Life
and Conversation, which keeps Com-
munion with the National Church
However false and scandalous this Re-
proach is, (as none is more) yet i
hath had its desired effect. *Come ou*
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her Sins, is common in every Disse
ters Mouth: And they have therefor
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ent from us, as they pretended; d as my Charity inclines to believe ſome well-minded People, in order attain unto a greater degree of Pu- ty. Say they, The worſt of People me into our Places of Worſhip, and ey care not to come in amongſt em, *leſt they be defiled.* This Plea ey have to excuſe their cauſing of iviſions; but in the mean while, *o be unto them from whom this offence ſt cometh.* At this many of Chriſt's *tle Ones have been offended,* who did t conſider that we live in the Church ilitant here on Earth. And there- re it cannot be expected that our ſo- mn Aſſemblies ſhould be in a better ndition than the Company of An- ls in Heaven, of whom it is Re- rded, *They kept not their firſt Eſtate, t left their own Habitation,* Jude 5. r the *Ark* of *Noah,* which is a like gure unto the Church, in which ere was one accurſed *Cham*, and reatures of all ſorts, both clean and clean: Or the Houſe of *Abraham*

in which there was a mocking *Ishmael.* Or the Family of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which there was one Son of Perdition; who did not only eat, and drink, and go in and out with him; but as it is supposed from *Luke* 22. 21. In the same Night in the which he was betrayed, *Judas* was also Partaker of the Supper of his Body and Blood. But our Dissenting Brethren do not consider further, That *the Kingdom of God is compared unto good Seed sown in a Field, amongst which was Tares sowed also*, Mat. 13. and that the Lord of the Harvest will let them grow together until the time of the Harvest, and the time of Separation is not yet come. It is like an heap of Corn mingled with Chaff, and God himself (not we poor Creatures) will take the Fan into his Hand, and throughly purge the Floor. The great Shepherd is to divide the Sheep from the Goats. Again, *The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Net that was cast into the Sea, and gathered*

of

of every kind, Mat. 13. 47. It is also set forth by the Marriage Dinner, where the *King's Servants went out into the high-ways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good, and the Wedding was furnished with Guests*, Mat. 22. 20. So that they were in the same Room together; for many are called, but few chosen. But to come yet nearer to our present purpose, it is expressly declared by Christ in the Parable of the Sower of the Seed, *Mat.* 13. that amongst four sorts of Hearers of the Word, there was but one which was good; and they were not in the least found fault withal for having been amongst the three other sorts of bad Hearers. Consider further, That God takes notice of the Spiritual Pride of them, *which say, Stand by thy self, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou: These are a Smoke in my Nose, a Fire that burneth all the day*, Isa. 65. 5. Why may not God's People meet with others, who as yet are not his People,

when

when the Word of Truth ſaith, *There are in the ſame Houſe Veſſels of Honour, and Veſſels of Diſhonour.* After *Peter* had came into *Cornelius* his Houſe, *He ſaid unto them that were met together, Ye know that it is an unlawful thing for a Man that is a* Jew *to keep Company with, or to come unto one of another Nation; but God hath ſhewed me, that I ſhould not call any Man common or unclean,* Acts 10.28. When People come together to Worſhip, Do they not come to Pray, and to Hear the Word Preached? What have they to do to judge one another, when every one muſt ſtand or fall to his own Maſter. Perhaps he whom at preſent thou ſetteſt at nought, accounting him a Reprobate, or Worldling, may be Converted and find Mercy. And though at preſent he is a great Sinner, yet God may give him Repentance, that *He may love much, when much ſhall be to him forgiven.* If thou wilt never come to any Publick Meeting to Worſhip, as long as any ungodly Perſon is therein,

therein; thou must then *forsake the Assemblies*, (which the Author of that Epistle, *Heb.* 10. 25, 26. reckons as the beginning of Apostacy) for Publick Worship is a great and necessary part of Religion, as appears by Holy Scriptures, and by the Practise of God's Servants and Martyrs since the beginning of Christianity. For in this corrupt World there is not a Congregation, where is not some Sinners and Hypocrites amongst them. And as ye commonly say, *The worse and lewder sort go to Church*, so likewise it may be supposed, That Hypocrites and Superstitious Persons do resort to the separate Meetings. And then thou must never go to them neither, if thou thinkest it unlawful to Worship God, if there should be any amongst ye, who are not of the Houshold of Faith.

Thus I have endeavoured to answer and remove that Objection, which hath hitherto hindred those that call themselves Christians from meeting

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in the same place to Worship God. And I wish that none among us have made the Breach yet wider, by saying, *That if one refuses to take off his Liquor after he hath well drunk already* (which in the Phrase of the Holy Ghost, is *adding Drunkenness to Thirst*) or if he will not run to the same Excess of Riot with others, and he makes Conscience of all his ways, refraining from such a thing, because it is a Sin, and displeases God, then forthwith (let him be otherwise never so obedient to Magistrates, and conformable to the Rules of the Church) he is called a *Presbyterian*. Whatever the Authors of this kind of Reproach pretend to Loyalty or Conformity, yet the *Church of England* hath not greater Enemies than those which would be thought to be of her own Houshold. In this the adverse Party Glories (and truly well they may, as if *Presbyterianism*, and true Godliness, were convertible Terms; and as if this Godliness was to be had only amongst them who style themselves

themſelves the Elect People of God; whereas if they would come to hear the Common-prayer read, they might learn from thence, that *Remiſſion of Sins is declared to them who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe the Holy Goſpel*; we pray that we may lead a *Godly, Righteous and Sober Life*; *that our Lives may be Pure and Holy*; *That we may caſt away the Works of Darkneſs, and put on the Armour of Light* (Collect for the Firſt *Sunday* in *Advent*) *That our Hearts, and all our Members being mortified from all Carnal and Worldly Luſts, we may in all things obey God's Bleſſed Will*; *That we may purifie our ſelves as God is pure*; *That all they who are admitted into the Fellowſhip of the Chriſtian Religion, may eſchew thoſe things that are contrary to their Profeſſion, and follow all ſuch things as are agreeable to the ſame*, *That we may be continually given to all good Works, and to withſtand the Temptations of the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil.* Much more may be ſeen to the ſame purpoſe

in the ſeveral Collects of Prayer, and in the *Church Catechiſm* and in the *Homilies*. In a word, the *Church* of *England* Requires what the Scripture Requires; and that is to give up our ſelves to God's Service, and to walk before him in Righteouſneſs and Holineſs all our days. All which by the Divine Grace and Aſſiſtance any one that will, may do, and yet continue all along in the ſame Communion: So that the aforementioned Surmiſe and Reproach is abominably falſe.

What ſhould hinder ye my beloved Brethren (for ſo I will term all thoſe who beleive all the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, and keep God's Commandments, Notwithſtanding ſome difference in leſſer opinions) from returning Back to our national Church, from whence ye have Unhappily departed? She ſtretcheth forth her hands to receive you, and would rejoyce in your fellowſhip. Ye may hear her Voice crying, *Come unto me, all that fear the Lord, Tell me ye Children which would Walk in the Truth, and therefore my*

Soul loveth you, Where do ye ſeek for it? And where do ye make inquiry for the Right Way? For why ſhould I be thus forſaken of ye? What have I done that ye ſhould turn aſide from me? Am I not the old Way wherein your Fathers Walked and are at peace? Hear what the Lord ſaith, Stand *ye in the Wayes and ſee, and ask for the old Paths where is the good Way, and walk therein, and ye ſhall find Reſt to your Souls, Jer. 6. 16.*

'When Chriſt and his Apoſtles were 'upon the Earth, I his Church was 'then alſo. I am built upon the Foun-'dation of the Prophets and Apoſtles, 'Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the Chief 'Corner Stone. I will affirm without 'any Proud Boaſting; for I owe this 'goodneſs only unto the Living God, 'that I am the Pillar and Ground of 'Truth. Try my Doctrines (not thoſe 'which ſome of my pretended Chil-'dren ſay are mine, but thoſe that are 'written in the Homilies and Articles) 'and ſee whether they are not agree-'able to the Word of God. I require all

'the ſame things which that requires
'and I enjoyn nothing contrary there-
'unto. Far be it from me to command
'any thing which is Sinful or which
'may diſpleaſe my beloved. I challenge
'all my Adverſaries to lay any ſuch thing
'to my charge. If there be any way
'of Wickedneſs in me, let them with
'all their Wit and Malice ſearch it
'out. For they know the words that
'I have ſpoken, they are written in a
'Book, ſo that any one may Read them
'and accuſe me of Iniquity and Falſ-
'hood if they can find any ſuch thing
'in me. But if there is nothing in me
'contrary to Truth or Godlineſs
'wherefore do ye Separate from me?
'If there is no juſt cauſe for it, where-
'fore do ye forſake my Aſſemblies
'There ye may hear the words of E-
'ternal Life Preached unto ye, why
'then will ye not go unto them? They
'which Preach there, have Lawful
'Power and Authority; and then ye
'know it is written, Remember them
'who have the Rule over you, who
have

'have ſpoken unto you the word of 'God; Whoſe Faith follow, con-'ſidering the End of their converſati-'on. Be not carried about with divers 'and ſtrange Doctrines; for it is good 'that the Heart be eſtabliſhed with 'grace, *Heb.* 13. 7. 9. Do not follow 'after every Teacher, who by good 'words and fair Speeches, deceive the 'Hearts of the Simple. Be not deceived by them, though they talk never ſo much for Godlineſs and an Holy Converſation. For thus did the Phariſees and Hypocrites of old; and under this pretence Men have entertained ſtrange Opinions and damnable Hereſies. *Take heed how ye hear.* If the ſeeming Purity of Mens lives of ſuch a Sect or Party, were a good and ſufficient Reaſon for us to joyn our ſelves unto it; This would be an Argument that we ſhould be of all; for in every one, ſome good and well-meaning People are to be ſeen. And at this rate we ſhould never be Stedfaſt and Unmoveable in the Truth of Chriſt, But we ſhould be

always *as Children toſſed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine*, which is contrary to the Command of the Apoſtle, and inconſiſtent to a Member of the new *Jeruſalem that is at Unity with it ſelf.* Wherefore that can be no Rule to Judge by, but his Word is left to try the Doctrines whether they be of God or no Thoſe things which make moſt for peace, ſeem moſt likely to be from God; for the *fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long ſuffering, Gentleneſs and Meekneſs.* By this you may know whether they Proceed forth from the good Spirit of God; as contrary-wiſe thoſe Teachings which do not Promote this End, but rather Confuſion, Strife, Envy, Evil-ſpeaking one of another, theſe are not of God.

The deſign of the whole Goſpel is *Peace, Unity* and *Love. Be of one mind,* Live *in Peace,* and *the God of Love and Peace be with you.* Innumerable are the Commands of God to this purpoſe. Mark how pathetically the

Apoſtle

Apoſtle exhorts all Chriſtians to it, *If it be poſſible, as much as lieth in you, live Peaceably with all Men*, Rom. 12. 18. *Now I beſeech you Brethren by the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye all ſpeak the ſame thing, and that there be no diviſion among you; but that ye be perfectly joyned together in the ſame mind, and in the ſame Judgment*, 1 Cor. 1. 10. *If there be therefore any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort of Love, if any Fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercy, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the ſame Love, being of one accord and of one Mind*, Phil. 2. 1, 2. *Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. There is one Body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one Hope of your calling. One Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm*, Eph. 4. 3, 4, 5. *Put on therefore as the Elect of God (Holy and Beloved) bowels of Mercies, Kindneſs, Humbleneſs of Mind, Meekneſs, Longſuffering, Gentleneſs, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any Man have a*

Quarrel againſt any, even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do ye. And let the Peace of God rule in your Hearts, to which alſo ye are called in one Body, Col. 3. 12, 13, 14. *And be at Peace amongſt your ſelves,* 1 Theſ. 5. 13. How Zealous is the ſame Apoſtle *Paul* againſt Diviſions and Contentions, as appears from the firſt and third Chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, and by what he ſaith, *Now I beſeech you Brethren, mark them which cauſe Diviſions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them,* Rom. 16. 17.

Conſider theſe things impartially in your Minds, and then judge whether cauſleſs Separation is not a grievous Sin? What is more contrary to the Doctrine of the whole New Teſtament? The end of our Living in this World, is that we may be *meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance among the Saints in Light.* And how can any one be ſo, who now departs from, and forſakes the Communion of Saints

here

here on Earth, which is in God's Ordinances, and meeting together at the ſame Place of Worſhip? Religion ſhould of all things moſt endear one to another; but it is only the corruption and abuſe thereof, which turns it into matter of Quarrel, Hatred and Animoſity. Many of us differ in little Opinions, not neceſſary to Salvation, and therefore we ſhould in no wiſe for the ſake of them endanger our Salvation indeed, by not obſerving the *weightier Matters of the Law, Mercy and Love of one another.* A Ceremony is an indifferent Thing, but in no ſort is that Great Commandment, *Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf.* And who is our Neighbour Chriſt hath explained by the *Jew* and *Samaritan*, who were of as different Perſwaſions and Congregations as any now among us. And if you ſay, that you heartily love us, why will ye not come to our Fellowſhip in Prayer? I do not know all the Reaſons; and therefore I cannot ſpeak to them particularly. But this

I may

I may put you in mind of, which is also your Duty, it being commanded, *Prove all things, hold fast that which is good*, 1 Thes. 5. 21. And therefore I adjure you so to do, as ye will answer the neglect hereof at the dreadful Day of Judgment, when the Secrets of all Hearts shall be disclosed, that if ye have any Doubts or Scruples which hinder your coming into our Communion, ye would go to some discreet and godly Minister, or Christian Friend, and make them known unto him, and require satisfaction therein. And then I nothing question, but if ye come in the simplicity and purity of your Souls, only out of a desire to be informed into the right way to Heaven, laying aside all former Prejudices, Prepossessions, Humours, Self-pleasing, Pride, and all worldly Reasons, and Self-interest (all which hinder from examining things sincerely and impartially); but if all these were set aside, then ye might have your Doubts removed, and your Scruples satisfied; so

that

that ye might return again into the Bosom of our National Church, who will most lovingly and kindly receive you. What an Happiness would this be, if all Christians would reunite into the same Fellowship, and meet again at the same Place to serve God? Then Primitive Times would return, when *they continued stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, all that believed were together, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple*, Acts 2. 42, 43, 44, 45. *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one Soul*, Acts 4. 32. *Behold how good and pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity, and to walk together to the House of God as Friends.* It was propheſied of the Goſpel-Times, that many Nations ſhall come and ſay, *Come, and let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, and to the House of the God of* Jacob, *and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths*, Micah 4. 2. *Who are theſe that fly like Doves to the Window?* Iſa. 60. 8. ſo harm-

harmleſs and peaceably ſhould they move together. Then all evil Surmiſings, and bitter Envying would ceaſe upon the account of Religion. Then *they that fear the Lord would ſpeak often one to another*, Mal. 3. 16. and not one againſt another, as now they do. There would be no more heard the Voice of the Slanderer, Blaſphemer, and Cenſorious Perſon. Then Malice, Hatred, and the Deſtructiveneſs of exorbitant Zeal would not be ſeen amongſt Men; but we ſhould *all love as Brethren, be pitiful and courteous one to another.* What a Bleſſed World ſhould we live in, if all Chriſtians were of the ſame Mind? I do not mean in every Matter or Queſtion pertaining to Religion (for ſeeing we know but in part, and all have not the ſame meaſure of underſtanding, that is not as yet: And a difference of Judgment in leſſer things may well conſiſt with the Unity of Faith and Love.) But as to the Foundation and Subſtantials of our Profeſſion, we might

might all agree to the ſame manner, and meet at the ſame Place of Worſhip.

But ſeeing that we have long dwelt amongſt them who are Enemies to Peace; this thing, as yet, is rather to be wiſhed for than obtained. And therefore until thoſe great Promiſes concerning that Univerſal Peace and Unity, which ſhall be one day amongſt all the People and Servants of the Lord are fulfilled; when *God will give them one Heart, and one Way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their Children after them*, Jer. 32. 39. *For then will I turn to the People a pure Language, that they may all call upon the Name of the Lord, to ſerve him with one conſent*, Zeph. 3. 9. *Moreover the light of the Moon ſhall be as the light of the Sun, and the light of the Sun ſhall be ſevenfold, as the light of ſeven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his People, and healeth the ſtroke of their Wound*, Iſa. 30. 26. *For the perfecting of the Saints,*

for

for the Work of the Miniſtry, for the Edifying of the Body of Chriſt, till we all come in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt, Eph. 4. 12, 13.

But until all this ſhall be accompliſhed, I who have long ſtudied and endeavoured the things which make for Peace, ſhall in the mean while repreſent this to the ſerious and through Conſideration of ſuch Chriſtians who deſign for Heaven, and deſire to be in the Right way thereunto, That from what is written, *And the Lord added daily to the Church ſuch as ſhould be ſaved*, Acts 2. 47. this Propoſition and common Maxim is gathered and concluded, That out of the Church there is no Salvation. And as there is One Lord, One Faith, One Baptiſm, One God and Father of all; ſo the Church of God is but One, according to what is written, *My Dove, my Undefiled is but one*, Cant. 6. 9. *And*

there

here ſhall be one fold, and one ſhepherd, John 10. 16. *Holy Father, keep through thine own Name thoſe whom thou haſt given me; that they may be one as we are; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, that they alſo may be one in us*, John 17. 11, 21. It is called *one Body*, Eph. 2. 16. But then that one Church and one Body, takes in and comprehends all God's faithful People in the whole World, even all them which *ſhall believe on Chriſt through their Word*, John 17. 20. And all thoſe who call on the Lord Jeſus in every Place. Each Perſon (unleſs driven into the Wilderneſs, or ſolitary Places by Perſecution) ought to hold outward Communion with others in Religious Duties. For Publick Worſhip is a neceſſary and indiſpenſable Duty in Religion. So that every one ſhould join himſelf to ſome Communion, if he lives where the Chriſtian Faith is profeſſed in its Purity. As the Apoſtle *Peter* doth plainly expreſs, that *Governours are ſent by God*, 1 Pet. 2. 14.

for

for Civil Matters; ſo we may ſuppoſe likewiſe that he hath appointed Governours and Elders in his Church, that all things may be done therein with Decency and Order. And we are to ſubmit unto their Ordinances, unleſs they are contrary to the Commandments of God, in which caſe we *are to hearken unto God rather than man*, *Acts* 4. 19. But we may lawfully conform to the Eſtabliſhed Church in the Countrey we live in, unleſs we are aſſured its Doctrine and Worſhip are contrary to the written Law of God; which hath not yet been fully and clearly proved, as to the Church of *England*, by all her Adverſaries, who would fain have deſtroyed and rooted out this Vine; but that as to the Foundation and Subſtance thereof (I do not ſay all her ſuperfluous Branches are ſo) it is planted by the Truth and Right Hand of the Living God.

And though ſome tender Conſciences may be afraid of a Ceremony, which is no Sin, there being no plain

Law

Law of God to forbid it, (and where is no Law, there is no Tranſgreſſion) yet let them lay in the other Scale Diſobedience, and cauſing Diviſions (both which are certainly Sins) and then behold which will weigh down. They muſt either comply with one, or be guilty of the other. If it ſhould be further granted, (for this is the moſt forcible way of Reaſoning, when admitting his Objection, we can certainly confute, if not convince, and actually bring over the Adverſary) That there was a little Corruption, Error, or Defects in the Church of *England*, yet this would not juſtifie any one to divide and rent the Body of Chriſt: For there were ſome faults in the Church of *Corinth*, and in the Seven Churches of *Aſia*, and yet they remained Churches ſtill; notwithſtanding which faults, ſuch were blamed all along who cauſed Diviſions and Offences contrary to the Doctrine which they had learned. If a Man were truly Conſcientious, he would

rather comply with an indifferent Thing, or with an Inconvenience, and lesser Evil (if it were so) to avoid a greater: As it would be if there should be a *Schism in the Body*, 1 Cor. 12. 25. For indeed he is not truly Conscientious, but only pretends to be so, who strains at a Gnat, and swallows a Camel.

To conclude this Point, Let every one sincerely do for the best, for God knows our Hearts; and this is evident, that continuance in a wilful and known Errour, is as dangerous as in a wilful and known Sin; and therefore Errour is equally to be avoided as Sin is. I charge thee, (Reader) before God, and his Elect Angels, to examine the Things here delivered without partiality. Remember I speak for Peace, and my Heart's Desire and Prayer to God is, That all who Profess and Call themselves Christians, may be led into the Way of Truth, and hold the Faith in the Unity of Spirit, and in the Bond of Peace, and in Righteousness of Life.

Con-

Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee Understanding in all things, that thou mayest understand what is his good and acceptable Will, and what is most pleasing in his sight.

What Man is he that feareth the Lord, him shall he teach in the way that he shall chuse, Psal. 25. 12. See to it well that thou do indeed fear the Lord; for this is the main and principal Matter; and then thou wilt go on in the Right Way from strength to strength, until thou dost appear before God in *Sion*. *Amen*.

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